PLST 401 – Law Practicum
Fall 2018
Syllabus

Class meets: M 6:30 – 8:30 pm in BKH 116 [sometimes may run over to 9:30 pm]
Instructor: David Warden
Office: Ryon Engr. Lab 234
Office hours: By Appointment
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Program Manager: Alex Wyatt; email: alex.wyatt@rice.edu.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This Law Practicum course focuses on the public and private practice sectors of the legal profession through a real-world work experience, coupled with some classroom instruction here at Rice. The goal is to expose undergraduate students to the field of law through structured on-site work experiences, relevant coursework, and professional development opportunities, and includes the following learning outcomes:

• Participate in an unpaid professional work experience in a law office, group, or agency environment to observe or shadow the practicing lawyers, and perhaps assist in meaningful ways. These positions are often referred to as apprenticeships or internships, with a distinguishing factor here being that the substance of the work experience will be determined by Rice faculty in consultation with the employer, in order to provide each student an appropriate and meaningful work experience.

• See how historical, ethical, or theoretical approaches to law work out in practice, and to begin to measure your own perceptions about a legal career with reality.

• Gain insight into the way the legal system works in specific contexts; to expand knowledge by researching assigned topics and learning the procedures, practices, and objectives of the organization in which the student works.

• Develop a variety of skills on the job; these skills may be usable at work following graduation.

There is a companion Law Practicum course given in alternate semesters that focuses on legal careers in the judicial system, including the work of judges and prosecutors.

RESTRICTIONS

During a given term, the student may not receive pay (excluding fellowships or financial aid) and credit for the same professional work experience. This Law Practicum course for academic credit is not repeatable. The only exception is the judicial Law Practicum course given in alternate semesters (PLST 402). Students receiving compensation for their work are not eligible to enroll for course credit.

CREDITS

To earn the 3 hours of academic credit, the student must engage in a professional work experience of a minimum of 10 hours per week for a minimum of 8 weeks, or for a total minimum of 80 hours. This work experience must be completed during the semester.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at the class meetings and final exam period is mandatory – **minus 2 points each if missed (see grading explanation below).** Attendance is also expected at the special professional development events, to be scheduled for either lunch or evening.

Regular attendance at your work location is expected. Problems with attendance may be noted by your supervisor or the Program Manager and will affect your grade at their discretion. Please send notification of any absences to the Program Manager (if planned absence, beforehand, and if unexpected absence, as soon as you reasonably can).

UNIVERSITY HOLIDAYS

The following are University Holidays. Students are not required to work on these dates:

September 3, 2018: Labor Day
October 8-9, 2018: Fall Break
November 22-23, 2018: Thanksgiving

DISABILITY-RELATED RIGHTS

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services in 111 Allen Center and ask them to provide the Instructor a statement of how to accommodate your disability.

PREREQUISITES AND REGISTERING FOR THE CLASS

• Have completed nine credit hours in the School of Social Sciences.

• Be approved by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences for the Law Practicum course, and matched with an appropriate organization by the Program Manager.

• Preferably be in your junior or senior year at Rice.

• Preferably have taken one of the following courses (though approval by the Dean to take the course will suffice for F2018 semester):

ANTH 326 Law, Power and Culture
CEVE 406 Introduction to Environmental Law
COLL 201 Introduction to Law
ECON 239 Law and Economics
ECON 439 Advanced Topics in Law and Economics
ENST 406 Introduction to Environmental Law
HUMA 315 Communication Law
MUSI 405 Music Business and Law
PHIL 116 Introduction to the Philosophy of Law
PHIL 316 Philosophy of Law
POLI 321 American Constitutional Law
RELI 118 Religion, Morality, and Law
SMGT 364 Sport Law
SMGT 464 Advanced Sport Law
SOCI 325 Sociology of Law
HIST 398 Topics in Legal History: The 10 Most Important Supreme Court Decisions

GRADING

Instructor performs all grading as follows, taking into consideration the evaluation of the on-site work supervisor, which will be obtained by the Program Manager:

1. Midway Report: this should include (1) a self-evaluation, including evaluation of the student's understanding of his or her place in their workplace organization, and (2) a reflection on the organization/entity of the student's professional work experience within the part of the legal world the student is working in; 3-5 pages, 20% -- **due Friday October 12**. Evaluation is the student's responsibility, and the Google form can be found at https://goo.gl/forms/jpbaGGsDXvImTAJm1. **Put hardcopy in Instructor's mailbox in Economics Dept., and email to Program Manager.**

2. Final Report: this should include (1) a reflection about what you learned through the professional work experience, accompanied by representative work samples (edited to exclude confidential information) and (2) a statement of work style, philosophy, and personal goals related to the professional work experience; 3-5 pages, 20% -- **due with final portfolio.**

3. Oral presentation (with accompanying slide deck) on the professional work experience, **presented during scheduled final exam** -- 10%. This will be done in teams and presented as a panel discussion, to be organized during the semester. **Due with final portfolio. Email slide deck to Program Manager no later than two days before the presentation. Bring hardcopy of final portfolio to oral presentation.**

4. Supervisor recommendation, 50%. (Supervisor evaluations will be provided at mid-semester (October 12) and at the end of the semester (December 1), and will be sent directly to the Instructor and Program Manager.) Problems noted by the supervisors will be handled on an individual basis by the Instructor, assisted by the Program Manager.

5. Attendance at all class periods, plus the final exam presentation period – **minus 2 points for each class missed.**

REQUIRED READING

• *Law and Economics*, by Cooter and Ulen, 6th edition (Chapter 3). PDF supplied.

• Other readings may be assigned in connection with specific class discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE – SUBJECT TO CHANGES DURING THE SEMESTER

Your professional work experience for the course will follow a schedule worked out between you and your supervisor, with the assistance of the Program Manager will. Students meet for classroom instruction over the course of the semester (2 – 3 hours each), tentatively as follows (exact dates and times to be communicated through Canvas):

1. August 20:

• Orientation meeting to go over the syllabus, discuss practical issues regarding the professional work experience (professionalism and self-presentation at work), and to discuss the specific types of organizations involved with the students. The Program Managers will also make you aware of additional events or workshops.

• Introduction to the legal system, and to the mechanics of legal research (Westlaw). Required reading before class: Chapter 3 in *Law and Economics*, Cooter and Ulen, 6th edition and the Supreme Court case of *Trump v. Hawaii*. [Posted on Canvas]

2. August 27: Lecture TBD

3. September 17: Lecture TBD

4. September 24: Introduction to scope of potential legal careers and discussion of how to get into the law school that is right for you. Discussion of the progress of the professional work experience, including the material for Midway Report.

5. October 1: Lecture TBD

6. October 29: Lecture on a specialty area of the law determined by the class, perhaps by an outside guest. Some possibilities might be perspectives of a judge, patent law, environmental law, health law, Constitutional issues of free speech or discrimination, immigration law, international law, or human rights issues. Class discussion on work experience and oral presentation preparation.

7. November 12: Lecture TBD

8. December 5-12 (TBD): Oral presentations will be scheduled for the assigned date of our final exam, or some other convenient date.

FINAL LAW PRACTICUM PORTFOLIO--DUE IN HARD COPY AT THE START OF THE SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM.

The student will create and submit a Law Practicum Portfolio. This portfolio is a systematic and purposeful collection that is intended to clarify the relationship between the professional work experience, course learning, and lifelong career development. The requirements for the portfolio are listed and described below.

PORTFOLIO SECTIONS*

1. Updated CV or Résumé
2. A Personal Statement suitable for law school applications
3. Midway Report
4. Final Report
5. Copy of oral presentation slide deck

* *The Law Practicum Portfolio is a tool to assist you in this learning experience as well as a representation of the type and quality of work you have done, and can prove to be a valuable asset in your future career search. Be sure to SEPARATE each of your sections so your evaluator can easily differentiate among each portfolio component.*

Assignment and Portfolio - Descriptions and Clarification

1. Updated CV or Résumé

Include an updated CV or résumé highlighting the skills and responsibilities you learned during your legal professional work experience. You may consider having the Center for Career Development or the Center for Written, Oral and Visual Communication review this document before you include it in the portfolio.

2. Personal Statement

Write a personal statement suitable for an application to law school about why you are interested in a career in the law, or otherwise explain your interest in law school.

3. Midway Report

• Self-evaluation, including evaluation of the student's understanding of his or her place in the workplace.

• Reflection on the place of the organization you worked in within the part of the professional legal world. This paper should demonstrate your understanding of the place of your work and your organization in the legal system. Its aim is descriptive, and might address some of the following questions--depending on what kind of work you have been doing:

- What courts are you working in (if any), and how do they fit into the US legal system?
- What does your organization contribute to the legal system? How does it relate to the courts?
- What kind of information has to be generated for your work experience and why?
- What kinds of formal documents do you have to generate, and why do they matter?
- In general: why does this work matter enough that people are paid money to carry it out?
- Why did your colleagues decide to work there?
- Would you consider working there after graduating from law school and passing the bar exam? Pros & Cons.

4. Final Report

• Reflections on what you learned and items that demonstrate what you did during your professional work experience. Appropriate items might include (but are not limited to) reports you write, descriptions of activities, and pictures or diagrams. Make sure it reflects the work YOU did (pictures of you, letter written from you, etc.). If you include pictures, please be sure to include a brief narrative explaining what is in the photograph. **Much legal work is confidential. If your work involves confidential matters, be sure to present it in such a way that the reader cannot identify the person or the case.**

• The statement on work style should reflect what you have learned about your personal work style. For example, you may consider when you are the most effective, whether you prefer to work alone or with others, how much direction you enjoy in tasks, and other similar questions. In addition, what did you learn about the legal system as a workplace or as a system? Now is the time for personal reflection.

5. Oral Presentation Slide Deck

Suitable, professionally done (by yourself) PowerPoint to assist your oral presentation. Email to Program Manager before the presentation. **Hardcopy due with portfolio.**